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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/041,693	01/07/2002	Margaret Ann Kato	659/921	7442

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EXAMINER

SNOW, BRUCE EDWARD

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3738

DATE MAILED: 02/04/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/041,693	KATO ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Bruce E Snow	3738

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.
- 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 33-51 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 33-51 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.

If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All
 - b) Some *
 - c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
 - a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 5 .	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Double Patenting

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

All claims are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over all claims of U.S. Patent No. 5,601,547, 5,683,376 and 6,336,921. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because they are claiming the identical absorbent article comprising a waist elastic system with all the same elements.

Drawings

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the following must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim 37, "plurality of elastic members" is not shown.

Claims 39 and 45, "intermittently joined" is not shown.

Art Unit: 3738

Claim 51, "outer cover comprises a liquid-permeable layer and a liquid-impermeable layer" is not shown.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

The following claims are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

Claims 39 and 45, "elastic member is intermittently joined to said elongate member" is new matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Willot (3,756,878).

Willot teaches an absorbent pant comprising a chassis having a front panel, back panel, a crotch panel and an absorbent structure 18. The absorbent structure inherently has a liner for contact with the body (best shown in figure 4) and is considered part of the chassis. The pant further comprising a closed loop waist elastic system including an elongate sleeve member defining a passage 5 therein and at least one elongate elastic member 7, 8 disposed within said elongate passage.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 33-39 and 51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Willot (3,756,878).

Willot discloses the invention as described above. However, Willot does not teach the waist elastic system being formed as a separate structure. Applicant teaches two configurations as shown in figures 2 and 3. (Willot teaches the configuration of figure 2.) Lacking any criticality in the specification, having a waist elastic system being a separate structure in lieu of those used in the references solves no stated problem and would have been an obvious matter of design choice within the skill of the art.

Regarding claim 37, lacking any criticality in the specification, a plurality of elastic members in lieu of those used in the references solves no stated problem and would have been an obvious matter of design choice within the skill of the art.

Regarding claim 51, lacking any criticality in the specification, the use of an outer cover comprising a liquid-permeable layer and a liquid-impermeable layer in lieu of those used in the references solves no stated problem and would have been an obvious matter of design choice within the skill of the art.

Claims 46-50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Willot (3,756,878) in view of Weil et al (5,242,436).

Willot discloses the invention as described above. However, Willot is silent in regards to the magnitude of decay of the waist elastic system. Weil et al teaches that elastic materials in a elastic waist system undergoing sustained stress/strain (extension/contraction) have diminishing forces with time (i.e. elastic creep). Therefore, it is desired to make sure this reduction in wearing forces over time doesn't fall below a minimum for wearing stability. **The elastic creep (decay) should be kept to a minimum.** See column 34, lines 51 et seq. (Weil et al further teaches the waist elastic system should not have insufficient contractive forces that result in the diaper slipping down after being worn and loaded. In contrast, excessive contractive forces may reduce the comfort for the wearer producing pressure markings on the wearer's skin. See column 34, lines 20 et al.)

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to have utilized the concept of keeping the elastic decay to a minimum as taught by Weil et al with the closed-loop waist elastic system of Willot to maintain the functional integrity of the waist system over repeated cycling.

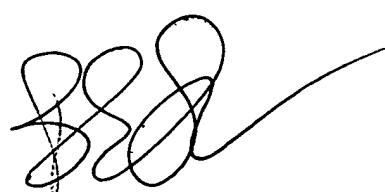
In regards to the specific claimed decay values, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to have kept this value to a minimum. Also, lacking any criticality in the specification, the use of the claimed "decay" values in lieu of those used in the references solves no stated problem and would have been an obvious matter of design choice within the skill of the art.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Bruce E Snow whose telephone number is (703) 308-3255. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Corrine McDermott can be reached on (703)308-2111. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 305-3590 for regular communications and (703) 305-3590 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0858.

bes
January 31, 2003



BRUCE SNOW
PRIMARY EXAMINER